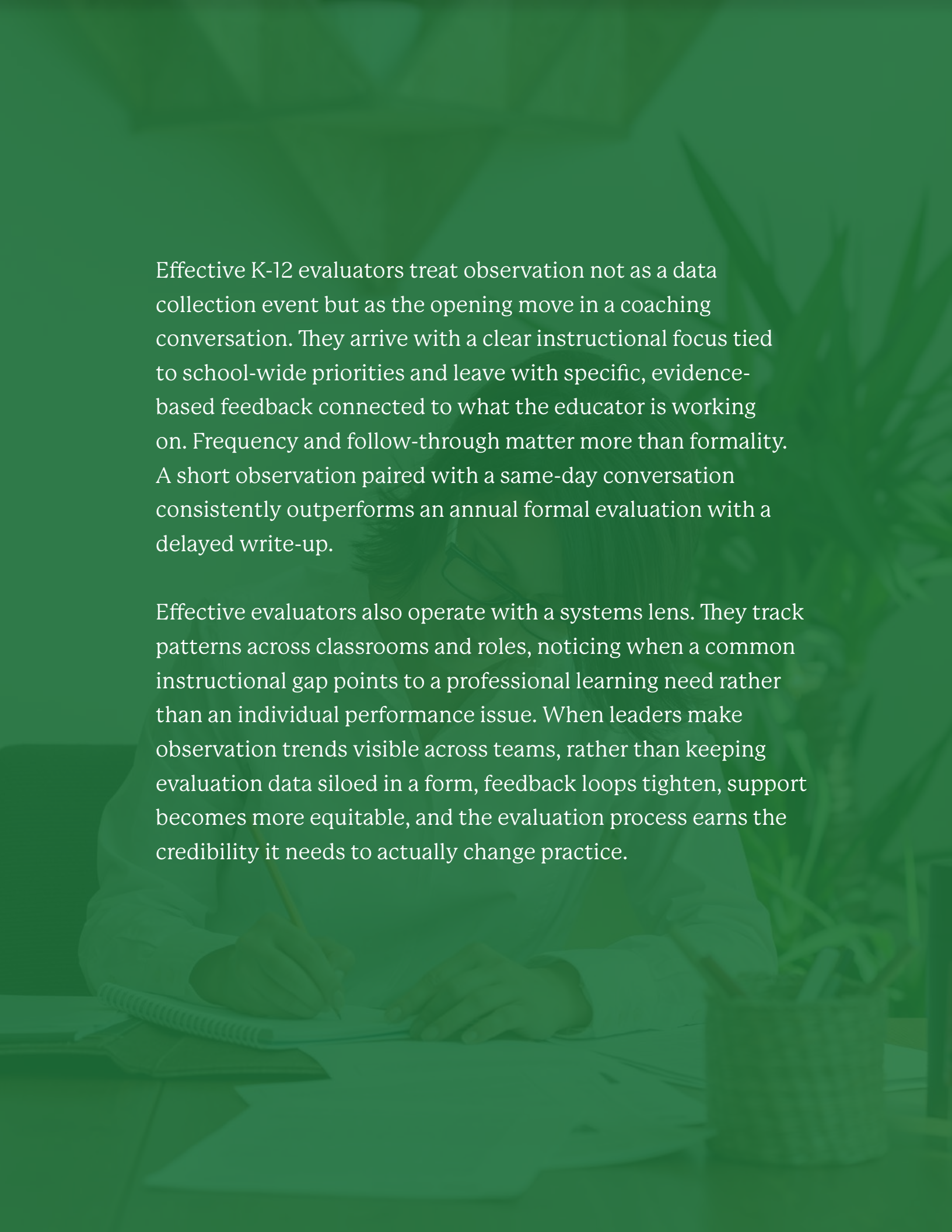


FROM COMPLIANCE **to**  
**CONTINUOUS**  
*IMPROVEMENT*

Building Growth-Centered Staff Evaluation and  
Development Systems in Charter Networks



**Evaluation**<sup>®</sup>  
*powered by Education Advanced*

A person is shown from the chest down, wearing a white shirt, sitting at a desk and writing in a notebook with a pen. The background is a blurred office setting. The entire image has a semi-transparent green overlay.

Effective K-12 evaluators treat observation not as a data collection event but as the opening move in a coaching conversation. They arrive with a clear instructional focus tied to school-wide priorities and leave with specific, evidence-based feedback connected to what the educator is working on. Frequency and follow-through matter more than formality. A short observation paired with a same-day conversation consistently outperforms an annual formal evaluation with a delayed write-up.

Effective evaluators also operate with a systems lens. They track patterns across classrooms and roles, noticing when a common instructional gap points to a professional learning need rather than an individual performance issue. When leaders make observation trends visible across teams, rather than keeping evaluation data siloed in a form, feedback loops tighten, support becomes more equitable, and the evaluation process earns the credibility it needs to actually change practice.

# Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	4
The Charter Challenge is a Systems Challenge.....	5
Why Traditional Evaluation Systems Fall Short.....	6
Redefining the Purpose of Evaluation.....	7
Four Design Principles for Charter Networks.....	8
Principle 1: Define common guardrails while protecting local flexibility.....	8
Principle 2: Make data usable, visible, and shared.....	9
Principle 3: Connect evaluation directly to professional learning.....	10
Principle 4: Simplify operations to protect leadership time.....	11
A Framework for Moving from Compliance to Continuous Improvement.....	12
1. Define the non-negotiables .....	12
2. Build a usable source of truth.....	12
3. Tie observations to support.....	13
4. Measure transfer, not participation.....	13
5. Roll out in phases and protect trust.....	13
Conclusion.....	14
Contributors and Internal Advisors.....	15
References.....	15
About Education Advanced.....	16

## Executive Summary

Charter leaders are under pressure to do something difficult and increasingly urgent: strengthen instructional quality, support educator growth, and meet rising accountability demands without overwhelming already-stretched school teams. According to the [National Alliance for Public Charter Schools](#), public charter schools now serve nearly 3.8 million students across 8,150 schools and campuses, which means the quality of staff evaluation and development systems has real consequences at scale.

**3.8M Students  
Served by Public  
Charter Schools**

**8,150 Charter  
Schools & Campuses  
Nationwide**

Too often, however, staff evaluation remains a compliance exercise rather than a growth strategy. In that model, organizations collect documentation but struggle to turn it into action. Leaders spend time managing rubrics, forms, timelines, and reporting requirements, while educators

**“School systems do not just need more professional development. They need evaluation, coaching, and learning systems coherent enough to matter.”**

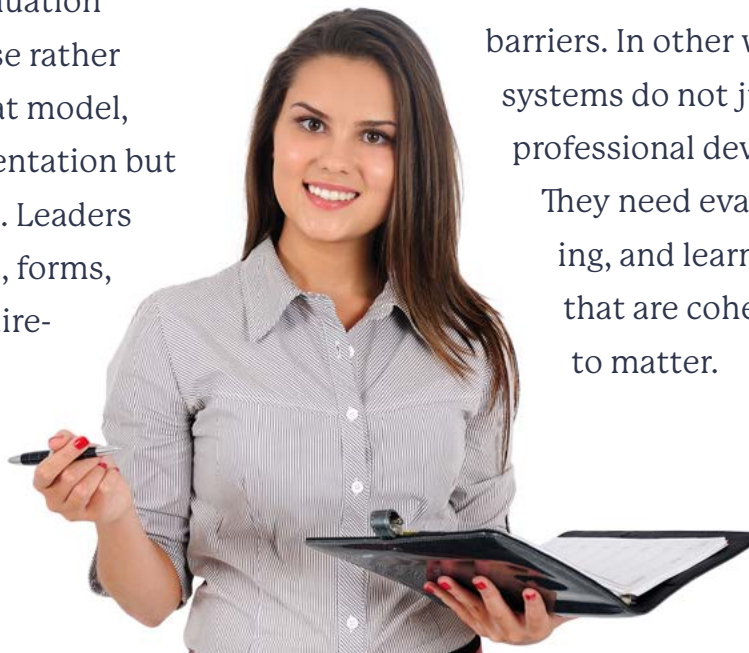
experience feedback as episodic, generic, or disconnected from meaningful support. The result is predictable: too much administrative drag, too little shared visibility, and not enough follow-through.

That problem lands in a profession already carrying heavy strain. [RAND](#) reported in 2024 that teachers work an average of 53 hours per week and experience frequent job-related stress or burnout at roughly

twice the rate of similar working adults. [OECD’s TALIS findings for the United States](#) found that only 50% of teachers said recent professional learning had a positive impact on their teaching, while 67% cited lack of time and

59% cited schedule conflicts as barriers. In other words, school systems do not just need more professional development.

They need evaluation, coaching, and learning systems that are coherent enough to matter.



The strongest research points in that direction. The [Learning Policy Institute's](#) review of 35 rigorous studies found that effective professional learning

is content-focused, active, collaborative, modeled, coached, reflective, and sustained over time. An [Institute of Education](#)

[Sciences](#) evaluation like-

wise found that five structured cycles of video-based coaching improved student English language arts achievement, reinforcing the value of repeated, targeted feedback over one-off training.

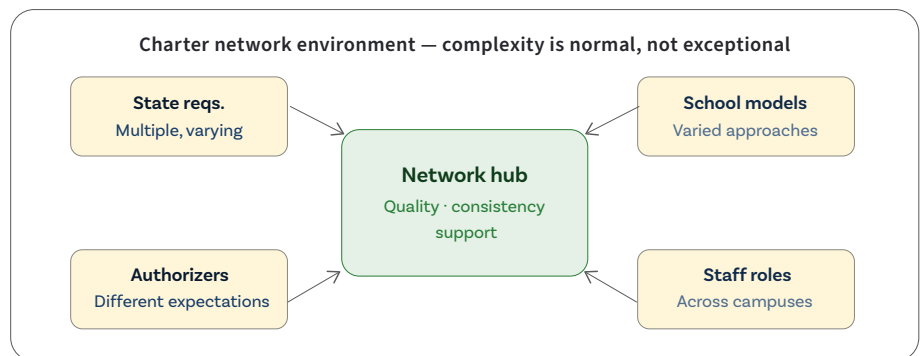
The argument of this paper is straightforward: charter networks are more likely to improve instructional consistency, strengthen staff development, and reduce administrative drag when they design evaluation as part of a connected growth system rather than treating it as a stand-alone compliance process. That means linking observations, feedback, coaching, professional learning, and leadership visibility in ways that are practical, human-centered, and adaptable across schools, roles, and states.

When evaluation is disconnected from coaching, professional learning, and decision-making, it becomes an administrative checkpoint.

## The Charter Challenge is a Systems Challenge

Charter organizations operate in environments where complexity is normal, not exceptional. Multi-campus networks often work across different authorizers, state requirements, school models, and staff roles. Even smaller charter organizations face the same underlying question: how can they maintain quality, consistency, and support without burying leaders in fragmented processes?

The answer is rarely found in a single rubric or annual evaluation cycle. The



deeper issue is system design. When evaluation is disconnected from coaching, professional learning, and decision-making, it becomes an administrative checkpoint. When it is connected to those functions, it becomes part of the organization's operating system for staff growth.

As Rachel Goodwin, Senior Director of Academic Services at Stride, Inc., put it, “In a network environment, you’re often juggling multiple states, different authorizers, and different expectations for staff.

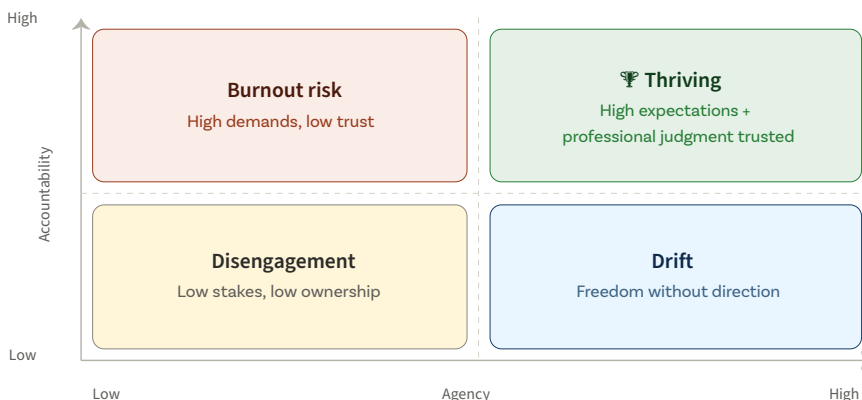
Without the right systems, leaders spend more time managing logistics than supporting instruction.”

That distinction matters because workforce conditions are already fragile. Research suggests that teachers benefit not only from support, but from environments where professional judgment is trusted and leadership structures feel meaningful. [OECD’s](#)

[TALIS 2024](#) results show that

teachers who report greater instructional autonomy and stronger opportunities to contribute to school leadership also report higher job satisfaction and lower stress in most education

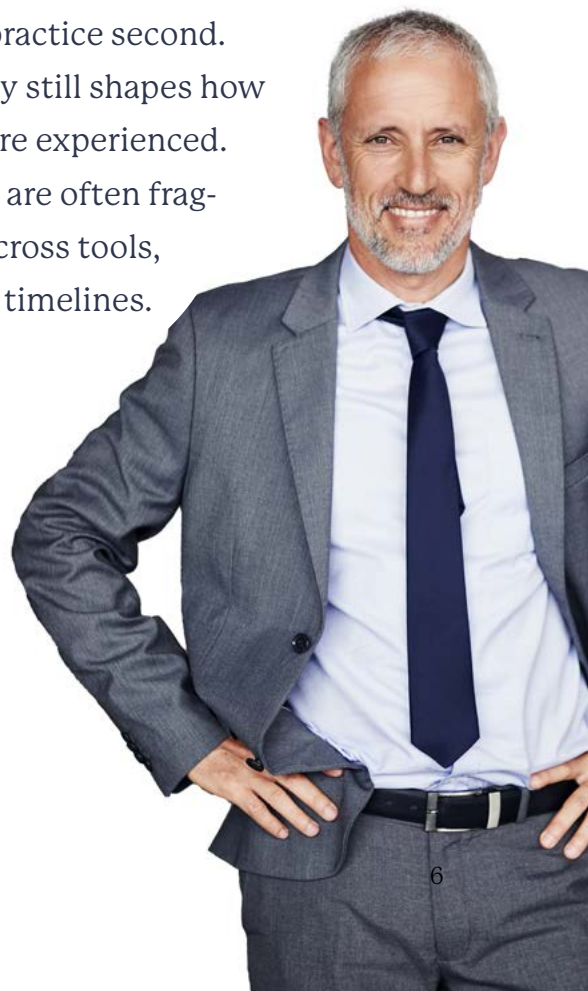
systems. That does not mean accountability should be loosened. It means accountability works better when it is paired with agency, clarity, and support.



For charter leaders, this is the strategic shift: the goal is not to reduce expectations. The goal is to design systems that make high expectations usable.

## Why Traditional Evaluation Systems Fall Short

In many schools and networks, staff evaluation was built to satisfy external requirements first and improve practice second. That legacy still shapes how systems are experienced. Processes are often fragmented across tools, roles, and timelines.



“  
**Accountability works better when it is paired with agency, clarity, and support.**”

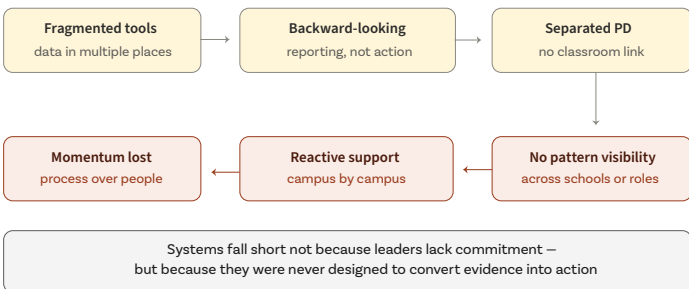
Reporting is backward-looking. Professional development planning happens separately from classroom evidence. And because leaders cannot easily see

“  
**Many systems capture information, but they don't connect it.**  
 —Dr. Amy Mount

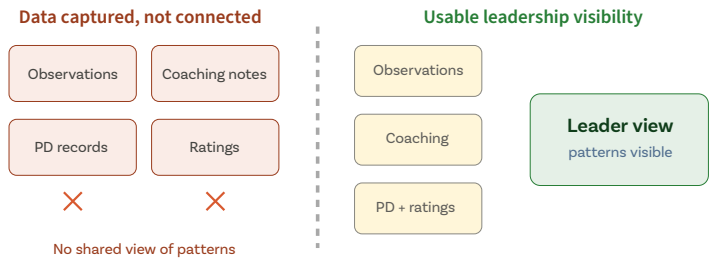
patterns across schools or roles, support becomes reactive.

Dr. Amy Mount, Director of Curriculum & Instruction at Gateway Regional School District, captured that challenge directly, stating, “Many systems capture information, but they don't connect it. Leaders end up with data in multiple places, which makes it hard to see patterns or follow through in meaningful ways.” She added, “When systems aren't aligned, leaders spend more time managing processes than supporting staff, and that's where momentum gets lost.”

patterns across schools or roles, support becomes reactive.



That is the core problem. Evaluation systems fall short not because leaders lack commitment, but because too many systems were never designed to convert evidence into action.



Goodwin made the same point from a network perspective, sharing, “When leaders don't have visibility into trends, across schools, roles, or regions, it's hard to be proactive. **Growth becomes reactive instead of intentional.**”

A growth-centered system has to do more than record activity. It has to help leaders see patterns, act earlier, and connect feedback to support.

## Redefining the Purpose of Evaluation

If evaluation is meant only to document performance, then annual forms and compliance workflows may be enough. But if evaluation is meant to improve teaching, strengthen feedback, guide coaching, inform professional learning, and create network-wide visibility, then it has to function differently.

A growth-centered model treats evaluation as infrastructure. It is not an isolated process. It is the connective tissue

between what leaders observe, what educators hear, what schools prioritize, and what development resources are deployed.

Goodwin explained, “When improvement is treated as something that happens all year, through coaching conversations, feedback loops, and shared expectations, it stops feeling like an event and starts feeling like the way we do our work.”

Iman Alattar, Senior Manager, Academic Learning Strategy & Leader Coaching at Stride, Inc., underscored that when ac-



or disconnected from their reality, it won't matter how well designed it is,” she stated. “Educators want feedback that helps them get better, not systems that feel punitive. When accountability is paired with coaching and support, it actually strengthens retention instead of hurting it.”

Compliance ritual		Engine for development	
Purpose	Document performance	Purpose	Improve teaching
Timing	Annual event	Timing	Continuous, all year
Output	Forms and ratings	Output	Action and growth
Feel	Surveillance	Feel	Support

That is the real shift. The question is not whether charter organizations should evaluate. The question is whether evaluation will function as a compliance ritual or as a practical engine for development.



countability is framed the wrong way, the whole model can break down. Systems are experienced differently when evaluation is framed as support rather than surveillance.

“Continuous improvement only sticks when teachers see themselves reflected in the process. If the system feels generic

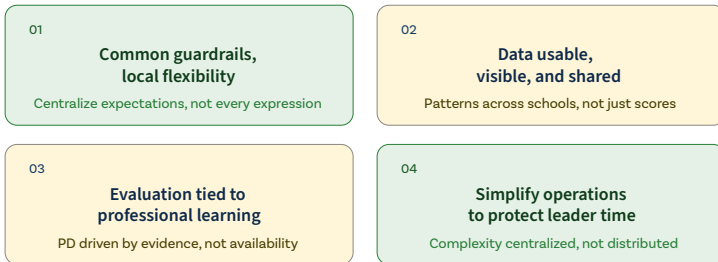
## Four Design Principles for Charter Networks

### Principle 1: Define common guardrails while protecting local flexibility

One of the hardest tasks in a charter network is deciding what must be consistent and what can vary. Dr. Meredith Ross, Senior Director of Student Assessment & Accountability at Charter Schools USA, framed the issue clearly. “Every state and authorizer has different expectations, and those differences don't disappear when

you centralize,” she shared. “The challenge is honoring those requirements without creating a completely different process for every school.”

Four design principles for charter networks



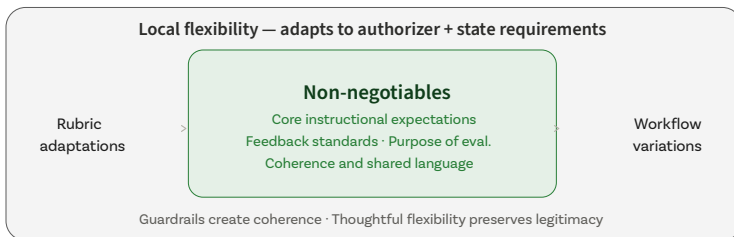
Many organizations treat standardization and consistency as the same thing. They are not. In practice, networks need common guardrails, not rigid uniformity.

That leads to a simple but powerful design principle: centralize the expectations, not every local expression of them. Networks should be explicit about what is

authorizer and state requirements demand it. Guardrails create coherence. Thoughtful flexibility preserves legitimacy.

## Principle 2: Make data usable, visible, and shared

Data only matters when it changes decisions. Ross put it this way, “Leaders don’t need more data; they need the right data. What matters most is being able to see patterns across schools and roles, not just individual scores. When leaders can identify trends, they can provide targeted

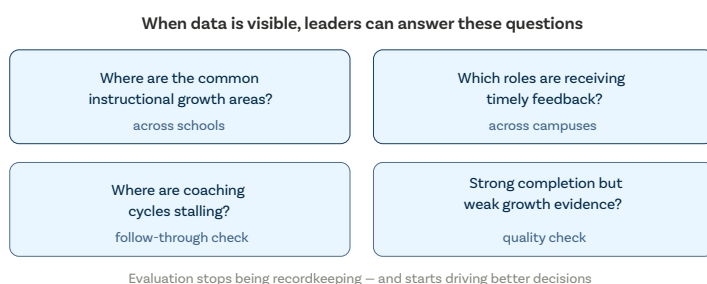


non-negotiable, such as core instructional expectations, feedback standards, and the overall purpose of evaluation. At the same time, they should allow schools room to adapt workflows, forms, or rubrics where



coaching and professional learning instead of reacting campus by campus.”

This is a crucial distinction. Many organizations have data, but fewer have usable visibility. Leaders need to be able to see common growth areas, emerging gaps, inconsistent rating patterns, and whether support is actually reaching the places that need it most. When that visibility exists, evaluation becomes less about isolated documentation and more about leadership intelligence.



Mount underscored why that matters, stating, “Creating shared visibility made a bigger difference than we expected. When leaders have access to the same information, conversations become more consistent, and support becomes more equitable.”

**“Creating a shared visibility made a bigger difference than we expected.**

– Dr. Amy Mount

In practice, this means building reporting and review habits around questions like these:

- Where are the common instructional growth areas across schools?
- Which roles are receiving timely feedback?
- Where are coaching cycles stalling?
- Which schools show strong completion but weak evidence of growth?

When leaders can answer those questions clearly, evaluation stops being a record-keeping exercise and starts becoming a tool for better decisions.

### Principle 3: Connect evaluation directly to professional learning

Professional learning often fails for a simple reason: it is designed too far away from classroom evidence.

As Alattar put it, “Too often, PD is designed around what’s available rather than what’s needed. Without clear data, learning experiences become broad and generic, and teachers struggle to apply them in meaningful ways.”

The Learning Policy Institute’s review found that effective professional development is most likely to work when it is content-focused, active, collaborative, coached, reflective, and sustained over time. In other words, better PD is rarely just more PD. It is more relevant, more connected, and more likely to change practice.

Mount made the same point from a systems perspective, sharing, “The key is making evaluation data usable. When leaders can easily see common growth areas, professional learning becomes targeted instead of generic.”

When evaluation and professional learning operate in separate lanes, leaders end up guessing. When they are connected, the organization can focus time and money where it is most likely to matter. When professional learning is relevant, timely, and clearly connected to educators’ day-to-day work, it not only strengthens practice but also signals meaningful investment in staff growth,

which can support stronger retention over time.

#### **Principle 4: Simplify operations to protect leadership time**

Operational simplification is often treated as a secondary concern. It should not be.

In practice, complexity competes directly with instructional leadership.

Disconnected systems pull leaders away from the people they are meant to support. Unmanaged variation across states

and rubrics can overtake consistency if the system does not do enough of the heavy lifting. As Mount summed it up, “When systems aren’t aligned, leaders spend more time managing processes than supporting staff.”

Ross made a similar point, stating, “If leaders are managing dozens of rubrics and forms, the system has to do the heavy lifting. Otherwise, complexity takes over and consistency gets lost.”

**“Leaders don’t need more data; they need the right data. What matters most is being able to see patterns across schools and roles, not just individual scores.”**

– Dr. Meredith Ross, Senior Director of Student Assessment & Accountability, Charter Schools USA



These are not just workflow complaints. They are leadership constraints. The broader lesson is that complexity should be centralized, not distributed across spreadsheets, reminders, disconnected workflows, and manual follow-up. Systems should reduce low-value friction so leaders can spend more time observing classrooms, calibrating expectations, giving feedback, and supporting growth.

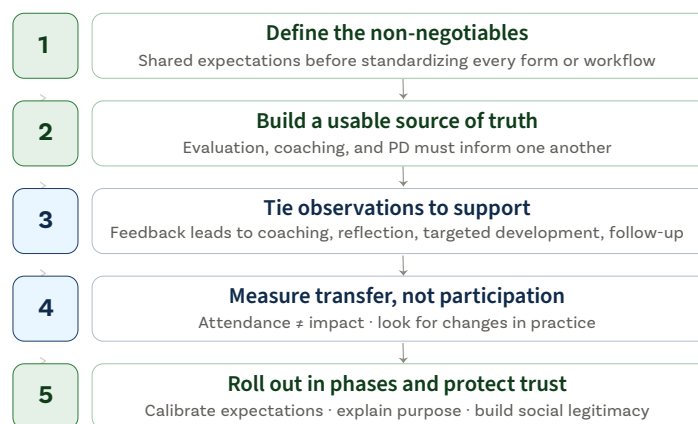
In that sense, simplifying operations is not an administrative side project. It is part of the instructional strategy.

**“When improvement is treated as something that happens all year —through coaching conversations, feedback loops, and shared expectations — it stops feeling like an event and starts feeling like the way we do our work.”**

— Rachel Goodwin, Senior Director of Academic Services, Stride, Inc.

## A Framework for Moving from Compliance to Continuous Improvement

For charter leaders looking to act on this work, five moves matter most.



### 1. Define the non-negotiables.

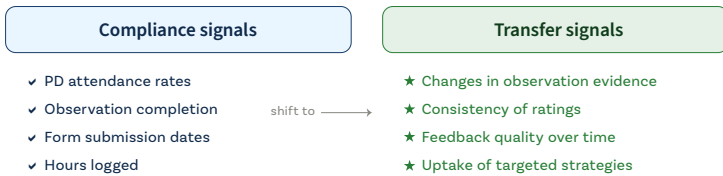
Be explicit about what strong instruction, meaningful feedback, and staff growth should look like across the organization. Do this before trying to standardize every form or workflow. Coherence begins with shared expectations, not paperwork.

### 2. Build a usable source of truth.

Evaluation, coaching, and professional learning do not need to sit in a single tool, but they do need to inform one another. Leaders should be able to see what is happening across schools and roles without assembling that story manually from disconnected systems.



Attendance is not the same as impact



### 3. Tie observations to support.

Feedback becomes more credible when it leads somewhere. Educators should be able to see how observations connect to coaching, reflection, targeted development, and follow-up. Accountability without support eventually becomes noise.

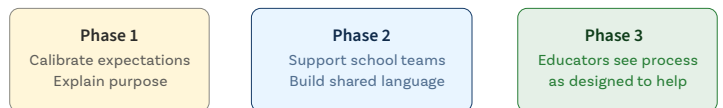
### 4. Measure transfer, not participation.

Attendance is not the same as impact. The real question is whether practice changes. Leaders should look for changes in observation evidence, feedback quality, consistency of ratings, and uptake of targeted instructional strategies.

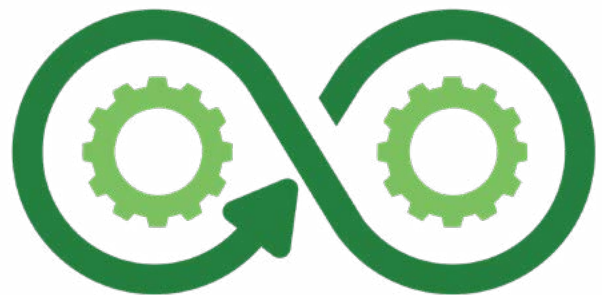
### 5. Roll out in phases and protect trust.

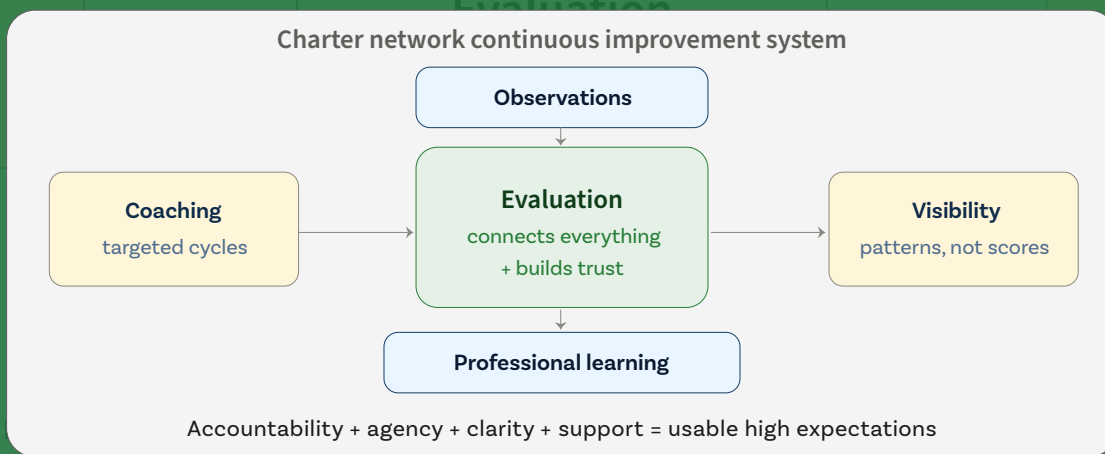
Systems fail when they are technically functional but socially rejected. Leaders need time to calibrate expectations, support school teams, and explain the purpose of the work. Growth-centered systems succeed when educators can see that the process is designed to help them improve, not simply to monitor them.

Systems fail when technically functional but socially rejected



Growth-centered systems succeed when educators trust the process





## Conclusion

The strongest charter organizations are not the ones with the most forms, the most dashboards, or the most tightly managed compliance calendars. They are the ones that turn accountability into a usable system for growth.

That requires a different design mindset. Evaluation cannot sit apart from coaching, professional learning, and leadership visibility. It has to connect them. It has to help leaders see patterns, focus support, and reduce the friction that keeps schools trapped in reactive work. And it has to do all of that while honoring the real complexity of charter environments: multiple campuses, varied authorizers, different staff roles, and uneven local conditions.

The good news is that the path is clearer than it often seems. Research points to the ingredients of effective professional learning and coaching. Practitioner experience points to the organizational conditions that make those practices usable: shared guardrails, local flexibility, common visibility, operational simplicity, and trust. When those elements come together, evaluation stops being a compliance event and starts becoming part of a continuous improvement system.



The goal is not to do more evaluation — but to build better systems around it

For charter leaders, that is the real opportunity. Not to do more evaluation, but to build better systems around the evaluation work they already have to do.



## Contributors and Internal Advisors

- **Iman Alattar**, Senior Manager, Academic Learning Strategy & Leader Coaching, Stride, Inc.
- **Rachel Goodwin**, Senior Director of Academic Services, Stride, Inc.
- **Dr. Heidi King**, Customer Success Manager, Education Advanced, Inc.
- **Dr. Amy Mount**, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Gateway Regional School District
- **Dr. Meredith Ross**, Senior Director of Student Assessment & Accountability, Charter Schools USA
- **Amy Stock**, Customer Experience Manager, Education Advanced, Inc.
- **Lisa Tunnell**, Product Manager, Education Advanced, Inc.

## References

- 🔗 [Education Advanced, Inc. Leading at Scale: How Charter Networks Turn Accountability Into Growth \(February 12, 2026\).](#)
- 🔗 [Education Advanced, Inc. Scaling Evaluation Across States, Rubrics, and Roles: How Charter Networks Maintain Quality at Scale \(February 13, 2026\).](#)
- 🔗 [Education Advanced, Inc. Building a System for Staff Success: How Networks Move From Data to Development \(February 14, 2026\).](#)
- 🔗 [Education Advanced, Inc. Making Every Professional Development Dollar Count: Turning PD into Measurable Growth \(February 15, 2026\).](#)
- 🔗 [Institute of Education Sciences. Study of Teacher Coaching Based on Classroom Videos: Impacts on Student Achievement and Teachers' Practices.](#)
- 🔗 [Learning Policy Institute. Effective Teacher Professional Development.](#)
- 🔗 [National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. What Is a Charter School?](#)
- 🔗 [OECD. Results from TALIS 2024 – Country Notes: United States.](#)
- 🔗 [OECD. Teacher Leadership and Autonomy: Results from TALIS 2024.](#)
- 🔗 [Doan, S., Steiner, E. D., & Pandey, R. Teacher Well-Being and Intentions to Leave in 2024: Findings from the 2024 State of the American Teacher Survey.](#)

## About Education Advanced

Evaluation by Education Advanced supports K–12 schools and charter networks in managing staff evaluation, feedback, and professional growth workflows. Designed to accommodate varied roles, rubrics, and reporting requirements, the platform helps education leaders improve visibility, reduce administrative burden, and support more consistent development practices across their organizations.

Education Advanced provides workflow and operations management solutions for K–12 school systems. Its product suite includes Evaluation, TestHound, and Pathways, supporting educator growth, assessment coordination, and student readiness. The company’s solutions are designed to help education leaders streamline complex processes and devote more time and attention to supporting educators and students.



[EducationAdvanced.com](https://www.educationadvanced.com)